STAT

REUTER
26 February 1985

CIA DOCUMENTS LINK MENGELE TO SOUTH AMERICAN DRUG RING
BY SARAH LAMBERT
WASHINGTON

CIA DOCUMENTS RELEASED TODAY SHOW JOSEF MENGELE MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN A SOUTH AMERICAN DRUG RING, AND A REPUBLICAN SENATOR URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO LEAD A WORLDWIDE HUNT FOR THE NAZI "ANGEL OF DEATH."

THE DOCUMENTS SHOW THAT IN 1979 THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY ASKED VARIOUS FEDERAL AGENCIES TO RUN A TRACE ON MENGELE IN CONNECTION WITH INTELLIGENCE REPORTS LINKING HIM TO A BIG DRUG TRAFFICKING OPERATION.

THE CIA DOCUMENTS WERE RELEASED AT THE REQUEST OF REPUBLICAN SENS. ALFONSE D'AMATO OF NEW YORK AND ARLEN SPECTER OF PENNSYLVANIA, WHO ARE SPEARHEADING A CAMPAIGN TO TRACK DOWN THE AUSCHWITZ DEATH CAMP DOCTOR.

SPECTER TOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE, "THE EVIDENCE AT HAND MAKES MENGELE LEGALLY A FUGITIVE FROM AMERICAN JUSTICE." HE SAID THIS JUSTIFIED THE GOVERNMENT LEADING AN INTERNATIONALLY COORDINATED HUNT FOR THE FUGITIVE, WHO WOULD NOW BE 73 YEARS OLD.

HE CRITICIZED THE CIA FOR ALLEGEDLY WITHHOLDING INFORMATION IN THE PAST AND "UNNECESSARILY SANITIZING" DOCUMENTS MADE PUBLIC TODAY.

THE FAILURE OF THE GOVERNMENT TO FOLLOW UP THE VARIOUS LEADS IT HAD RECEIVED OVER THE YEARS WAS INDICATIVE OF A U.S. DESIRE TO "SWEEP THE MATTER UNDER THE RUG," SPECTER SAID.

"LET'S FACE IT. NO ONE GIVES A DAMN ABOUT NAZI WAR CRIMINALS," HE SAID.

ACCORDING TO SOURCES QUOTED IN THE CIA REPORTS, MENGELE ARRIVED IN SOUTH AMERICA IN 1951 AND TRAVELED EXTENSIVELY ON THE CONTINENT BEFORE SETTLING IN PARAGUAY IN 1972.

THERE HE ALLEGEDLY OWNED A FARM UNDER AN ALIAS AND WAS "HEAVILY INVOLVED IN NARCOTICS TRAFFIC," THE SOURCES TOLD THE CIA.

SUSPICIONS THAT MENGELE WAS LAUNDERING DRUGS PROFITS THROUGH BUSINESSES HE OWNED IN SOUTH AMERICA AND WEST GERMANY PROVED UNSUBSTANTIATED, THE DOCUMENTS SAID.

THE DOCUMENTS DO NOT INDICATE THAT THE MATTER WAS PURSUED. OTHER REPORTS, PARTS OF WHICH WERE BLACKED OUT FOR SECURITY REASONS, SAID MENGELE HAD HAD PLASTIC SURGERY AND ONCE SHARED A HOUSE WITH ADOLF HITLER'S DEPUTY, MARTIN BORMANN.